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ABSTRACT

Legal provisions for sex equity are found in Title II of the Education Amendments of 1976 and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Although occupational opportunities for women expanded beyond the traditionally sex-segregated occupations during the World War II era, in the seventies legislators decided to require further changes. State vocational education sex equity coordinators have been challenged to accomplish their federally regulated tasks within the conservative confines of state educational agencies. They have worked to develop a multi-dimensional definition of sex equity, technical assistance systems, philosophies regarding sex equity's importance in vocational education, and support networks. Needs assessments have been conducted to identify groups without full access to vocational education. Variables contributing to a sex-equitable teaching-learning system with vocational education as a student option include general education system commitment, vocational educator's concepts of equity, role of counselors in career decision making, and attitudes of business, community, and students. Strategies coordinators have found successful include incentive grants, inservice education, career education, and materials development. Local education agencies are recommended to accent and reward sex equitable actions, and accentuate sex equity in all areas of the vocational education delivery system. (YLB)

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Research and Development Series No. 214F

EQUITY FROM A SEX FAIRNESS PERSPECTIVE

by Nancy Smith Evans

THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR RESEARCH IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

SUMMARY Vocational educators have grappled with equity as a problem and have espoused it as a cause since 1963 when Congress issued both an equity mandate and an equity challenge with the passage of the Vocational Education Act. This paper is one of seventeen reports commissioned by the National Center for Research in Vocational Education to meet the equity challenge through a multidisciplinary approach encompassing three perspectives—academic, vocational education, and special interest group advocacy.

The following paper begins with a summary of the legal provisions for sex equity in Title II of the Education Amendments of 1976 and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. After briefly summarizing the history of women in the workplace to illustrate the tradition of occupational segregation, the author concentrates on the challenges and responsibilities of sex equity coordinators and makes numerous suggestions for the successful implementation of the legislation. Among the recommendations are the building of networks, inservice training for vocational education personnel, needs assessments to identify groups not having full access and the reasons why, and supportive services for those entering nontraditional occupations. In addition, the paper defines specific subsets of women and their particular problems and discusses the problems faced by men seeking to enter traditionally "women's jobs."

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Introduction

Change in American lifestyles during the 1960s and 1970s was strongly evidenced by, among other events, the dramatic increase in women's entrance into the paid work force. This labor market modification, in turn, created its own dynamic impact on most, if not all, of the sustaining elements of our nation's society. Because the U.S. Department of Labor and other agencies charged with planning have repeatedly underestimated female participation in the paid work force, the unanticipated large number of women moving onto payroll sheets has forced government officials to look more critically at the

needs of this group whose strength lies in its growing numbers. In an effort to solve some of the unique causes and effects that had surfaced from this change process, Congress mandated in the Education Amendments of 1976 that recipients of federal vocational education monies must take actions to overcome sex bias, sex stereotyping, and sex discrimination in such programs which prepare men and women for the world of work. Coupled with Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments, this new directive for educators responsible for vocational education formulated a substantial basis for an intense examination of the delivery system for elements that have perpetuated occupational gender segregation, wage earning inequities, and other facets of sex discrimination permeating occupational (including homemaking) situations. This alloyed legislative mandate in turn required aggressive actions to be taken for eliminating these barriers and remedying all sexist situations.

Although the U.S. Constitution charges states to carry the main burden for education of the populace, the federal government is also accountable for tax dollars it expends for any national projects such as vocational education. To meet its own obligations to the federal constituency while at the same time maintaining sensitivity to the states' decision-making powers, Congress specified under the Education Amendments of 1976 that states receiving federal vocational education monies must make programs accessible and beneficial to all prospective students, especially the following:

a. Persons of all ages

b. High school students

c. Individuals preparing to enter the paid work force

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d. Postsecondary students

e. Employed individuals seeking upgrading of skills

f. Employed individuals seeking retraining

g. Persons with special educational handicaps

To assure itself that funded programs would be accessible to both sexes within the above categories, Congress also required each state to employ a person full time to coordinate the development and implementation of special programs and activities for overcoming sex bias and sex stereotyping. This sex equity coordinator was obligated by the Education Amendments of 1976, Title II, Section 104.72, to do the following:

a. Take action necessary to create awareness of programs and activities in vocational education designed to reduce sex bias and sex stereotyping in all vocational education programs, including assisting the state board in publicizing the public hearings on the state plan.

b. Gather, analyze, and disseminate data on the status of men and women students and employees in vocational education programs of the state.

c. Develop and support actions to correct problems brought to the attention of these personnel through activities carried out under paragraph (b), including creating awareness of the Title IX complaint process.

d. Review the distribution of grants and contracts by the state board to ensure that the interests and needs of women are addressed in all projects assisted under this Act.

e. Review all state vocational education programs (including work-study programs, cooperative vocational education programs, apprenticeship programs, and the placement of students who have successfully completed vocational education programs) for sex bias.

f. Monitor the implementation of laws prohibiting sex discrimination in all hiring, firing, and promotion procedures within the state relating to vocational education.

g. Assist local educational agencies and other interested parties in the state in improving vocational education opportunities for women.

h. Make information developed under this section available to the state board,

the state advisory council, the National Advisory Council on Vocational Education, the state commission on the status of women, the commissioner, and the general public, including individuals and organizations in the state concerned about sex bias in vocational education.

i. Review the self-evaluations required by Title IX.

j. Review and submit recommendations with respect to overcoming sex bias and sex stereotyping in vocational education programs for the five-year state plan and its annual program plan prior to their submission to the commissioner for approval.

SETTING THE STAGE FOR AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Old English laws identifying women as chattels were changed just during the last 130 years! This legal liberalization was a milestone in the long, tedious metamorphosis of the western civilization belief that males were the sole valuable contributors of society to that of accepting both women and men as sustaining the culture's moral and political principles. Although women continued to be victimized by laws and judicial interpretations as having fewer rights than their male counterparts, public recognition of women and of their developing spheres of power was finally beginning.

With its governmental roots tied securely to the English concepts of justice, the prospering United States began to shake some inequities out of its own systems during the early 1900s as part of a need to utilize all of its human resources more efficiently. Industrialization and urbanization caused the fast-growing, diverse population to test its flexibility for dealing with different cultural backgrounds and philosophical views of all Americans. The art of negotiation became a characteristic of the country's free enterprise system, bringing with it a melding of ideas that began to agitate for change in the social fabric, especially for a clarification of women's public status. By 1919, the government of, by, and for the people finally recognized the personhood of women by enfranchising them. Although women in many communities had participated fully in local governmental processes since the pioneer era of the 1800s, the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution had to be ratified, after much debate, before women in all communities were given access to the power at the polls.

At the same time, women began to leave domestic and small cottage industry work to enter the manufacturing companies. Women, however, were not yet allowed access to the skilled and craft jobs in industry, but were usually allowed only in job situations like sweatshops which held little hope for longevity or adequate financial benefits.

Bolstered by technological developments, new job creations, and work force needs of the World War II era, occupational opportunities for women expanded beyond the previously limited number of job categories. The postwar labor market status, however, influenced by patriotic efforts to hire returning veterans, forced many women to leave their trade occupations and move back to the traditionally female, low-skilled jobs which usually yielded lower economic benefits. The relegation of women to a limited number of jobs re-established a sex-segregated occupational market that lasted until the fomenting 1960s. It was during this time, when Civil Rights causes wielded lasting impact on everything from family life and religious organizations to governmental bureaucracy, that a new women's movement began.

As growing pressures continued to form, federal legislators and interest groups agreed that the necessary systematic change toward liberalizing occupational roles could be accomplished only through a planned process which would infuse the emerging equity principles in every controllable federal initiative. As a means to this ultimate goal, legislators created the sex equity coordinator's position within the 1976 framework of the vocational education reauthorization. They empowered the sex equity coordinator to act as one of the needed catalytic agents for assisting vocational education to become more cognizant and inclusive of all potential groups of students.

An overview of mid-1970s vocational education programs indicates that most of the enrolled females were in homemaking, business and office education, and home economics job-training programs, whereas males were enrolled in the traditionally men-dominated programs of agriculture and trade and industrial education. These types of data, strengthened by the vocal demands of feminists, reinforced legislators' decisions to require changes.

Understanding that educators needed time to break enrollment stereotypes, Congressional staffs that worked with the sex equity regulations did not put unrealistic expectations on the states to meet ratios, percentages, or given numbers of men and women who should enroll in vocational programs. Instead, the states were required to deal with such intangible components of the delivery system as attitudes, awareness, and self-correction strategies and techniques. Adequate efforts in these human development areas by educators were expected to result in enrollment changes and successful placements in work situations by program completers.

CHALLENGES TO SEX EQUITY COORDINATORS

The state vocational education sex equity coordinators have been challenged to accomplish their federally regulated tasks within an organizational structure which

has been revered for its support of and perpetuation of tradition. To find ways to stimulate conservative state educational agencies with suggestions for removal of sex discrimination from their old-and-tried ways presented some opportunities for creative problem solving for which few role models have been developed.

In order to develop credibility and to maintain some level of self-integrity, most sex equity coordinators labored continuously to update a multidimensional definition of sex equity and the working knowledge required to apply it to activities related to the vocational delivery system. It was also necessary for them to develop a realistic technical assistance system which differed for each agency and individual who sought help.

Many people inside and outside the educational agencies, including vocational educators, perceived the sex equity coordinators as being hostile agents who represented alien interests. As a result, most coordinators had to develop clear-cut philosophies regarding the importance of sex equity as it pertains to vocational education opportunities. These philosophies, when based on strong principles, helped coordinators to keep in perspective any negative forces that could have become a drain on personal and professional energies. Coordinators who exhibited personal commitments to improving vocational equity found it easier than those who did not to attract motivated people and to establish credible reputations with educational peers, especially with those peers working in the same agencies. This credibility factor was vital to the continuance of any change process that sex equity coordinators could inspire.

Besides developing personal, professional, and issue-importance credibility,the sex equity coordinator also had to determine supportive elements already available within the state's communities and agencies. These networks had the capability for transmitting information about successful activities, issuing warnings about trouble spots, and serving as a reservoir of resources. One example of a support source is the work done by the state education agency to comply with Title IX requirements. In some states this proved to be very useful for combining efforts in areas of mutual concern. In other states, however, coordinators who sought team building with other state agents found that there were no other agents who were working in the area of sex discrimination, sex bias, and sex stereotyping. Other coordinators encountered agents who were involved in sex desegregation projects that did not wish to form a network or share resources and information. Most of these situations were created by the state agency's commitment to the issues surrounding sex equity.

Sex desegregation grants and special public and nonpublic-supported grants for women's concerns provided coordinators with some successful program models to use when developing their own statewide plans for action. These projects also

identified a valuable supply of sex equity consultants who had earned their expert credentials from on-the-job training.

Networks and women's issues projects provided the coordinators with two unique pools of resources. First, the projects acted as demonstration models, delineating techniques and strategies useful for certain populations in special circumstances. Under similar circumstances when the same goal was desired, the coordinators made use of these same or modified activities without spending extra energies on formulating and testing new ideas. Second, many of these model projects generated research data from which new concepts for innovative problem-solving situations could be tested. The ability to create new, spin-off areas of research from model projects enabled many coordinators to extend their range of technical assistance in serving the needs of local agencies that were trying to break down sexist barriers.

Coordinators found that some general education sex equity projects were already working on vocational programs because of the scope of their contracts. These projects were unfortunately few in number and not always applicable to all of the varied vocational education situations. For this reason coordinators searched for other local school agencies, consultants, and interest groups that would be amenable to incorporating sex equity strategies within the range of their vocationally related work.

Pressures for getting people the right information before it was vitally needed forced coordinators to develop some slick and quick ways for inservice education of prospective sex equity activity facilitators. Their workshops specialized in informing, educating, and motivating personnel for meeting the ultimate objectives of the projects. As a result of their experiences in personnel development, the coordinators developed skills that their employing agencies could utilize in other vocational education settings.

LOOKING FOR EDUCATIONAL SEXISM

To fulfill the mandated job functions and to develop appropriate programs, most sex equity coordinators took a needs assessment of their state to determine: (a) what types of people were already benefiting from vocational services; (b) how their needs were being met; (c) where other groups of people in local communities were who could benefit from vocational education programs; and (d) why they were not utilizing this resource.

Although before 1976 many state and local agencies had implemented successful programs to overcome the effects of sex bias and sex stereotyping in

vocational education, other states had not made any effort to deal with sexism in education, including overt noncompliance with Title IX. Regardless of any state's activities, needs assessments based on the above questions began to identify certain groups of residents in every state who did not have full access to vocational education opportunities because of the barriers of sex bias, sex stereotyping, and sex discrimination. Among these groups were

- Female high school and postsecondary students who were seeking preparation for occupations traditionally considered to be "men's jobs." Until the mid-1970s the majority of female students who were vocationally career oriented were enrolled in classes that had been traditionally for females—homemaking, nursing, secretarial sciences, and home economics job training. In light of the lifestyle and economic predictions that the majority of both women and men would be in the paid work force for twenty-five plus years, the persistence of sex-segregated vocational enrollments needed to be critiqued. An investigation needed to be made as to why women were not found in large numbers in the machine shops, welding, apprenticeship, and technical programs that lead to higher paying positions. Another fact indicating possible sexist barriers was that only a few pioneering females had already enrolled in nontraditional vocational education programs. Usually a high dropout rate accompanied this group of "firsts." What was needed for this group of females who had made their career decision to go into a nontraditional occupation was a temporary, special, supportive component to be added to the regular delivery system.

- Displaced Homemakers. This term was used to describe a group of adult women and men who had worked as full-time homemakers but due to death of a spouse, desertion, divorce, or other reasons for loss of their main source of income had to enter the wage-earning labor market. Most of these people had few or no occupational skills, were in an emotional and financial crisis, and had dependents. These displaced homemakers were in urgent need of personal and occupational guidance, immediate access to a job (either through cooperative or job training programs), and supportive services which would help them regain control of their lives.

- Female Adults Who Needed Up-Grading of Skills. Many full-time homemakers who were seeking to re-enter the paid labor market had developed job entry level skills at some time in the past. What they needed was an intensive skill refresher course to prepare them for the competitive work force. Other women already in the labor force found themselves in low paying, dead-end positions. Access to job mobility, both laterally and upwardly, was possible only through an upgrading of skills, acquisition of more technical abilities, and counseling. Local schools were the most

obvious source of the needed vocational training expertise, and the vocational delivery system was flexible enough to meet this growing need within communities.

- Female Adults Seeking Retraining for Occupations Traditionally Considered "Men's Jobs." Many females who had successfully entered the paid labor force were seeking vocational retraining for jobs previously considered to be for males only. Although Title IX had broken some of the obvious barriers which kept women out of educational programs, it had not made its full impact until after many women in the work force had entered the world of work in no- or low-skilled jobs or had trained for traditional female occupations which had not given them enough satisfaction.

- Males Seeking Initial Preparation or Retraining for Occupations Traditionally Considered to be "Women's Jobs." Many males were beginning to seek entry into occupations traditionally considered to be for females only. These men, however, were meeting with the very harrassment, discouragement, and other sexist barriers about which females had been complaining. These males also needed the educational bureaucracy to become sensitized to a wider concept of sex discrimination, which in their case included the concerns of men entering nontraditional programs and the biases they encountered.

- Females with Special Educational Needs. These women include the handicapped; economically disadvantaged; limited-English speaking, racially, ethnically, and culturally disadvantaged; rurally isolated; disruptive youth; dropout-prone students; and school-age parents. Individuals in each of these groups encountered barriers to equitable vocational training in addition to those of sex discrimination, sex bias, and sex stereotyping.

ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES ON SEX EQUITY

In recent years a number of educational research studies have dealt with the environmental components of a teaching-learning situation in efforts to identify prevailing positive and negative forces. If a similar study were to be set up by a coordinator for analyzing the variables contributing to a sex equitable teaching-learning system that utilizes vocational education as a viable student option, the research design would probably investigate: (1) the equity commitment of the general education system in which vocational education programs are located; (2) the vocational educators' operating concepts of equity; (3) the role of school counselors in helping students make career decisions; (4) the attitudes of employers toward hiring students who have received job-training in occupations

considered to be nontraditional for their sex; (5) the attitudes and needs of the community in respect to vocationally trained students, especially nontraditional; and (6) the students' degree of orientation to the world of work.

General Education System

The general education system in which vocational programs function is an encapsulating organism that can act either as an enabler to a sex equity momentum or as a suppressor by isolating and fragmenting such efforts. Since the general education system establishes the philosophical tone for policy development and implementation in all of its programs, sex equity can become a realistic goal for implementation only when it is acknowledged and deemed important by the decision-making bodies and administrators responsible for the system's leadership.

Sometimes coordinators found that the stereotype of vocational education held by other general system personnel presented a greater barrier than the system's priority assignment of sex equity. In such systems vocational education had been used as a dumping ground for slow learners, students with learning disabilities, and unmotivated, disruptive youth. Before confronting sexist barriers, coordinators had to develop an updated image of vocational education and sell its validity to all members of the general system. This approach offered general educators a different perspective on the delivery capabilities of vocational services, especially in providing nontraditional career preparation opportunities.

Vocational Education

Vocational educators were the prime group for which strategies were designed. Although many individuals in this group felt that they had been singled out unfairly for their dealing with sex equity, most were willing to acknowledge the need to change programming. A barrier with which many coordinators wrestled was that of receiving little or no support for sex equity from the vocational administrative power block. Without visible administrative support, coordinators had no way of directly reaching classroom teachers, counselors, and supportive staff. Coordinators with administrative support had access to all vocational personnel.

Counseling

Counselors have been perceived by educators and non-educators alike to be primary transmitters of information about the courses students need to meet personal and career goals. Coordinators discovered that these personnel were barriers to female students' access to appropriate programs if counselors were unaware of labor market projections for females, had not informed students of job opportunity projections, believed vocational opportunities were limited by sex

stereotypes, transmitted their personal vocational and sex biases in counseling situations, used sex biased and stereotyped materials for assessment and guidance, did not implement Title IX, and continued to use dated guidance techniques when advising people with special educational needs.

Business and Industry

Major private sector employers usually supported education's activities to open up training opportunities, especially for females. Coordinators' greatest challenges in business and industry were the small, conservative employers who were hesitant to offer placement situations for nontraditional vocational students. Small employers were also resistant to placement of any student who had special educational needs. These groups achieved a breakthrough when apprenticeship councils, Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) projects, and construction trades added their pressures for more sex equitable work force opportunities.

Community

The degree of concern a community exhibited for the welfare of men and women affected by occupational sexism positively correlated to the degree of support for nontraditional job preparation found in its schools and businesses. In communities where women's activists had established some successes and legitimacy, the issue of vocational sex equity became an infused part of normal operations. On the other hand, in places where feminist issues had caused community polarization or were nonexistent, coordinators met a great amount of resistance, fear, and hostility. The increase in awareness of church groups, service groups, political activists, and parent-teacher organizations about equity concerns created a social support system for individuals considering preparation for nontraditional occupations.

Students

Students can be expected to make competent decisions about career choices only after they have been given adequate information about their options by education personnel. They also need the emotional support of family and peers. Career guidance that does not include education of relatives and friends sets up frustrating barriers to students who are considering a nontraditional occupation. Reaching the significant others--the other people in a student's environment, helps to alleviate some sex-biased barriers.

WORKABLE STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES

In carrying out their job functions, coordinators have compiled many lists of successful strategies and techniques useful for affecting various spheres of influence. Below is a sampling of what coordinators have done to fulfill both the letter and intent of the Education Amendments of 1976.

Incentive Grants

Because many people who could have an influence on lessening vocational sexism have demonstrated a "what's in it for me?" attitude, coordinators have had to search for various motivational reasons to inspire the necessary change activities. Some states have required local agencies that receive vocational monies to develop and submit a plan of action that incorporates such educational procedures as local inservice education activities, curriculum revision, and youth group civic projects, all of which center around the elimination of one or more of the sexist barriers. The motivator was the tie between sex equity and requirements for general vocational funding. Coordinators based the provision of technical assistance on the locals' needs to document their own plans for compliance purposes. Incentive grants were made to these local agencies for implementing their plans.

In some states coordinators sponsored statewide and local personnel development workshops to create an awareness of the sex-biased barriers to vocational programs. Workshop content identified how sexism prevents expansion and improvement of vocational services and presented simple strategies for implementing positive actions. The workshops were designed to emphasize the value of removing sex bias and sex stereotyping in vocational education.

Incentive grants were also used to develop exemplary programs and materials. The content of these grants was directed toward research and development needs deemed important by the state agencies and local groups. These grants aided coordinators in serving special populations such as displaced homemakers and nontraditional students.

Inservice Education

Inservice programs were the most effective means of reaching local education agencies' administrators, teachers, counselors, and support personnel. Objectives of the programs ranged from raising awareness, conducting evaluations, and obtaining information, to producing materials. Similar programs were conducted for state administrators, supervisors, teacher educators, and consultants.

Career Education

Many coordinators spent time developing promotional materials that gave information about vocational education and emphasized nontraditional training opportunities. Coordinators also used resources in elementary and prevocational classes to help them revise sexist career materials. Some states sponsored sex equity career advertisements on television and radio. Career activities were held for students and community members alike. These included career fairs and short-term, nontraditional work experiences. Some coordinators established special guidance and counseling services for groups of people who were considering vocational education programs.

Materials Development

Sex equity coordinators have developed everything from single page informational flyers and visual how-to items, to extensive research reports on issues surrounding the sexism found in education. Slide-tapes, movies, games, posters, brochures, billboards, books, and pamphlets provide the channels through which the coordinators have reached out to educational institutions and the general public.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Accentuate, Not Aggravate

Most state vocational administrative agencies have expended a great amount of effort to meet at least minimum compliance with the sex equity mandates. Those agencies which have reaped the greatest rewards for their investments have been positive, systematic, and progressive in their commitment to the sex equity coordinators' work. These agencies used the sex equity mandates in constructive ways to improve the quantity and quality of their vocational education services. Agencies that were more negative in their response to eliminating sex barriers treated the coordinators' tasks as hindrances. This negative stance caused many administrators and educators in the classrooms to miss opportunities to counteract sex bias among a greater population.

Recommendation: Policies and procedures of local education agencies, including state agencies, should accent the need for eliminating sex bias, sex stereotyping and sex discrimination so that vocational education programs can be more responsive to society's needs. Emphasis should be placed on the rewards for achieving sex equity.

"Prioritize" Not Trivialize

Vocational agencies that formally and informally kept sex equity as a primary organizational goal succeeded in reaching high levels of equity within the given constraints of their operations.

Too often, however, agencies' representatives treated the sex equity efforts as trivial "women's issues," thereby suggesting that the issue was not worthy of serious consideration. Their comments were usually followed by, "I'm busy doing what I got hired to do. Don't bother me with something else!" This type of comment devalued coordinators' work, denigrated anyone working on such activities, and at the same time revealed the shallowness of some educators' understanding of the universal effects of sexism on our society.

Recommendation: Educational decision makers should make sex equitable actions a high priority for the organization and should seek ways for enhancing the human potential of all people it employs and educates.

Infuse, Not Diffuse

The progressive state agencies that have been successful in implementing the sex equity requirements put their coordinators in close contact with the major decision-making body and made sure that the coordinator had influential input into all activities carried out by the vocational agency. This enabled sex equity concepts to be infused throughout all segments of the delivery system and maintained a focus on the priority of the issue.

In other states the coordinators did not have access to the vocational decision makers and could react to sexist vocational activities only after they had occurred. The coordinators were usually placed low in the bureaucracy ranking so that their activities would be negligible at best.

Still other states have sought to have a representative for handicapped, minority, and disadvantaged concerns similar to the one for sex discrimination. In cases where this has occurred, resultant turf fights and conflicts have created a dilution of efforts and a conflict of resources used.

Recommendation: Educational agencies should make efforts to ensure that the priority of sex equity be accentuated in all areas of the vocational education delivery system. Dilution of efforts and resources should be avoided so that all energies are productive in striving toward equity ideals.

SUMMARY

The legislative requirement in the 1976 Vocational Education Act for a sex equity coordinator marked an historical turning point in the growth of the federal vocational education project. The coordinators' job mandated that each state receiving vocational education monies be charged with the responsibility to take aggressive steps for implementing needed strategies for achieving a civil rights goal which crosses all racial, ethnic, handicapped, aged, and disadvantaged populations.

Although the coordinators have directed their activities toward meeting the same federal regulations, the operational modes of the coordinators defy stereotyping. As a group their members can be found in secondary, postsecondary, higher education, or vocational agencies. Budgets range from the legislatively mandated $50,000 to $1+ million (a rarity!). Their methods for assisting locals range from offering administrative services to offering traveling workshops. Philosophical attitudes toward fulfilling their functions range from strict enforcement of the law to creative group problem solving.

The coordinators have established centers for special needs groups and stretched some vocational programs to be more flexible in their standard operating procedures. Many have created close working relationships with government agencies and service groups, that had never before been approached. Rather than confronting political activists, many coordinators have participated in networking strategies with them for implementing mutual concerns.

The legislative experiment to use vocational education as a medium for aiding social change went a long way toward meeting the ultimate goals of the legislation and regulations. The most active and progressive coordinators were allowed to function as positive change agents within the vocational education system rather than to sink in the bureaucratic abyss around which they walked. Accentuation and infusion of the coordinators' work will continue to enhance the delivery capability of the vocational education system.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Before vocational educators can adequately meet the special needs of special groups, they must be committed to a philosophy of equitable education. The issue of equity in education has received a great deal of attention over the last ten years from the legislative, judicial, and academic sectors. As a result of this attention, research and analysis have shown that the term "equity" has a different connotation for nearly everyone who has attempted to define and apply it to educational programs. In addition, a host of related terms such as equality, disparity, and discrimination are a part of the vocational educator's daily vocabulary.

In an attempt to help vocational educators to articulate a definition of equity, the National Center for Research in Vocational Education has commissioned seventeen papers on equity from three broad perspectives—academic, vocational, and special needs. The authors in each of the three groups provide their own perceptions of and experiences with equity in education to bring vocational educators to a better understanding of this complex but timely issue.

The National Center is indebted to these seventeen authors for their contribution to furthering research on equity in vocational education.

We are also indebted to Dr. Judith Gappa, Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs at San Francisco State University for reviewing and synthesizing all seventeen papers. Special thanks also go to Cindy Silvani-Lacey, program associate, for coordinating the papers and to Regina Castle and Beverly Haynes who spent many hours typing manuscripts.

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